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Security Council

Fifty-fourth Year

Provisional

3987th Meeting
Friday, 19 March 1999, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Qin Huasun	(China)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Petrella
	Bahrain	Mr. Al-Dosari
	Brazil	Mr. Valle
	Canada	Mr. Duval
	France	Mr. Dejammet
	Gabon	Mr. Dangue Réwaka
	Gambia	Mr. Jagne
	Malaysia	Mr. Hasmy
	Namibia	Mr. Andjaba
	Netherlands	Mr. van Walsum
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Slovenia	Mr. Türk
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Jeremy Greenstock
	United States of America	Mr. Burleigh

Agenda

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Letter dated 4 March 1999 from the Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/1999/278)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Expression of sympathy in connection with the recent helicopter crash in Haiti

The President (*interpretation from Chinese*): At the outset of this meeting, I should like, on behalf of the Security Council, to extend deep sympathy to the Governments and the people of Argentina, the Russian Federation and the United States for the great loss of life suffered in the crash of a helicopter flying for the United Nations in Haiti on 14 March 1999. I would request the representatives of Argentina, the Russian Federation and the United States to convey to their respective Governments and to the bereaved families our deep condolences.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Letter dated 4 March 1999 from the Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/1999/278)

The President (*interpretation from Chinese*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Burkina Faso, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Germany, Japan, Kenya, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Rwanda, South Africa, the Sudan, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. She Okitundu (Democratic Republic of the Congo) took a seat at the Council table; Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso), Mr. Ndaruzaniye (Burundi), Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt), Mr. Kastrup (Germany), Mr. Takasu (Japan), Mr. Mahugu (Kenya), Mr. Dorda (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), Mr. Mazimhaka (Rwanda), Mr. Vermeulen (South Africa), Mr. Erwa (Sudan), Mr. Mbabazi (Uganda), Mr. Mwakawago (United Republic of Tanzania), Mr. Kasanda (Zambia) and Mr. Muchetwa (Zimbabwe) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*interpretation from Chinese*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations on the letter dated 4 March 1999 from the Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council, contained in document S/1999/278.

The first speaker inscribed on my list is the Minister for Human Rights of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, His Excellency Léonard She Okitundu, whom I welcome and on whom I now call.

Mr. She Okitundu (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*interpretation from French*): I wish to take this opportunity to express my pleasure at seeing you, Sir, presiding today over the Security Council. Your presidency is for me a source of pride, because China has excellent relations with my country, the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I feel duty-bound to thank you for allowing my delegation to speak here in order to help find ways and means to put an end to the armed aggression suffered by my country.

Nor can I fail to thank your predecessor, Mr. Robert Fowler, the Ambassador of Canada, for his skill in guiding the Security Council's work last month and particularly for his productive contacts with my country's delegation with respect to today's meeting. I should like also sincerely to thank the members of the Security Council for having responded favourably to this request, which is, after all, a legitimate one.

Article 52 of the Charter encourages the Security Council to encourage the development of peaceful settlement of local disputes through regional agreements. My delegation is aware of the Security Council's efforts to ensure the proper implementation of that provision, in particular in two statements it made on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. For this we are most grateful. But we must not, however, lose sight of the fact that the last paragraph of that same Article allows

the Security Council simultaneously to apply the provisions of Articles 34 and 35 of the Charter.

It is for that reason that my delegation decided to initiate the process that has led to this debate, with the legitimate goal of drawing the Council's attention to the danger posed by the continuation of the conflict that is currently under way in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Far be it from us to tax the patience of this gathering by reiterating facts and events it is already quite familiar with. My delegation wishes to impress upon international opinion the finer points that have meant that despite all the concessions made by my Government, the negotiating process has not yet led to the signing of a cease-fire. The efforts deployed by certain countries that are Members of our Organization, at both the regional and international levels, to find a peaceful settlement to the conflict would have already succeeded had all the parties involved acted in good faith and with honesty throughout the negotiating process.

However, the stubbornness and intransigence of Rwanda and their determination to remain on Congolese territory have been the sole obstacles to a peaceful solution to the Congolese crisis.

To be sure, negotiations are continuing at the regional level in the Organization of African Unity, whose efforts I should like to hail, but it should be known that the effective involvement of the international community would in no way thwart those regional efforts. Accordingly, my Government, as a result of the impasse in the negotiating process, felt it timely to appeal to the international community to become more involved in the quest for a lasting and peaceful solution to the conflict.

My Government wishes to draw the attention of the United Nations to the determination of the Congolese nation as a whole and of its tremendous need for peace and for internal and external security. It expects the international community to become genuinely and positively involved, with a view to inducing the aggressors to engage in sincere negotiations to ensure regional peace and stability. Such an atmosphere would be conducive to the realization of the programme of national reconstruction and development, which all Congolese yearn for. My Government believes that resolving the current crisis requires the convening of a regional conference of the countries of the Great Lakes region that would bring together leaders and their respective opposition forces under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations.

One need only look back at the negotiating process for peace, begun in Lusaka, to see that my country has considerably changed its position in favour of negotiations leading to a cease-fire. Let us recall in this context that my Government had decided to bring together, within or outside of the country, the population of the country as a whole with a view jointly to examining the causes of these disputes and to take account of them in the management of public affairs.

As members are aware, My Government has just proposed a national debate involving all of the active forces of the Congolese nation. The level of these concessions is proof of our flexibility in responding to the need for a peaceful solution to the crisis in the Great Lakes region.

None of our concessions have elicited a similar response on the part of the aggressors, and the Security Council is aware of this. The international community will recall that it had to bring great pressure to bear on Uganda and Rwanda in order for those two countries to acknowledge their military involvement on Congolese territory and their participation in this war. Is the pressure to stop there, despite the refusal by those countries to withdraw from the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo? Must we still hear of the atrocities committed daily by those countries against the most vulnerable sectors of our population, atrocities that have repeatedly been condemned by non-governmental organizations?

The Democratic Republic of the Congo shares with nine other countries more than 9,600 kilometres of land borders, none of which are free from threat or from the danger of direct or indirect stabilization. Upon his accession to office, President Laurent Désiré Kabila had focused on pacifying and stabilizing the Great Lakes region, which was in the grip of great instability, and made it his goal to export peace, security and development. Let us recall the initiative of President Kabila, who, in close cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme, organized a regional conference on peace and development in the subregion.

But this did not take into account the bad faith, and especially the grand ambitions, of the current aggressors, who endeavoured to ensure the failure of the initiative.

This question of insecurity as a reason for such aggression is nothing new. The statement made by the Ugandan Minister for Foreign Affairs in Lusaka on 27 October 1998 is most telling. He said that Uganda's security concerns had existed before President Kabila took power in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Unfortunately, it can be seen that, in the case of Uganda and of its ally, Rwanda, just a few years after the coups carried out by the current authorities of those countries, no effort has been made to reach out to the exiled opponents to integrate them into the structures of their respective societies.

Since, as the saying goes, there's no place like home, these political exiles will seek every available means to rejoin their societies. That is an entirely legitimate right. Since, like their Governments, they find the language of arms more expressive than dialogue, insecurity will grow for natives and foreigners alike. The odious murder of the Western tourists in Bwindi Park, Uganda, is an unfortunate illustration of this and remains fresh in our memories.

What objective attitude should responsible leaders have adopted in such circumstances? I suppose that they could have approached their opponents and negotiated with them, as they insist we do towards the reconstruction of their respective countries.

Unfortunately, that was not the case. They found it easier to carry their war onto Congolese territory. Today, the consequences for the native populations of that war, and especially of the occupation of the eastern territories, is terrible and absolutely deplorable. By way of example, I would point to the massacre of 858 people in Kasika; of more than 600 at Makobola; and, more recently yet, the horrible massacre at Kamituga, all committed by the Rwandan Patriotic Army. I wish to spare the Council a litany of the massacres perpetrated in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I would simply refer to Security Council document S/1999/205 of 25 February 1999, by which my Government transmitted the "White paper on massive violations of human rights and of the basic rules of international humanitarian law by the aggressor countries (Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi) in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo."

In view of the complexity of the question and of the horrors being committed in the occupied Congolese territory by the regular armed forces of neighbouring countries, the international community, through the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations, has merely issued a few timid declarations on the violations of the territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. A strong condemnation of the violation of the basic principles of the OAU and United Nations Charters would prevent the negotiations from being bogged down and war atrocities from being committed on the ground. The number of these atrocities is now countless and they continue to exact an extremely heavy tribute from the innocent population.

In seven months of war, thousands of innocent people have been murdered in the most horrendous manner; some have even been decapitated. This is beyond all imagination.

It is in this context that I come to the Council today to ask it to deal objectively with this situation so as to end the hostilities in my country by peaceful means. By way of example, my Government might be amenable to peacekeeping forces' being deployed to guarantee peace and security along the borders. How long could peacekeeping forces remain effective in the Great Lakes region, however, if reconciliation among the warring parties in those countries that have attacked my own did not include all the grassroots forces of their nations in the structures of their respective countries?

As I emphasized earlier, the borders of my country with its neighbours to the east are more than 2,000 kilometres long. Thus, one must wonder how peace and security, and above all the time necessary to deploy such a force, can be truly guaranteed. Our concern is to end as soon as possible the martyrdom of the population in the eastern and Kivu provinces, which remain under the occupation of the regular armed forces of Uganda and Rwanda.

My Government is fed up with mere statements of good intentions. It wants a definitive solution to this question with the help of the entire international community. That is why, after the troops of aggression are withdrawn, it would wholeheartedly call for the convening of a regional conference of the Great Lakes countries, to which leaders and their respective opponents would be invited. We have set the stage for our participation and my Government is ready to join, whenever possible, the entire opposition in a national debate. Such an approach is essential for Uganda and Rwanda, which are suffering from a lack of national cohesiveness, the real cause of insecurity in their countries and in the Great Lakes region.

The body that you, Sir, have the privilege of leading today has received from the international community the heavy responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. The Great Lakes region suffers from chronic instability and a complete breakdown of peace, causing the focal point of tension constantly to shift in the absence of a definitive solution. Yesterday, Rwanda; today the Democratic Republic of the Congo; what about tomorrow? No one knows.

Paragraph 2 of Article 24 of the United Nations Charter calls on the Council to act in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations in such circumstances. That is why my Government wishes the Security Council to become more involved in the search for a peaceful and lasting solution to the current conflict. My Government seeks peace and wishes to live in harmony and good understanding with all its neighbours. My Government agrees to sign a ceasefire agreement, followed by the deployment along the border of a buffer force, with a precise timetable for the withdrawal of the aggressor troops. Such a force would be tasked with monitoring and securing the borders shared by the Democratic Republic of the Congo with Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda.

My Government is also resolutely determined to re-establish a state of law and fundamental freedoms throughout its national territory and has formalized the opening of the political landscape, notably by the promulgation of Law 194 of 29 January 1999 on liberalizing the activities of political parties. My Government recently demonstrated its good faith towards this opening by proposing the convening of a national debate to include every region, every political tendency and every socio-political sector of the country, including the so-called rebels, so as to enable them to consider and work for the future of the Congolese nation at the dawn of the third millennium. My Government fully supports the idea proposed by France for an international conference on peace and security in the Great Lakes region.

My Government is convinced that the Democratic Republic of the Congo will succeed in restoring peace and domestic harmony. However, in order to ensure peace throughout the Great Lakes region, it is of the highest important that peace reign within the national boundaries of Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda. The international community has the duty and the obligation to help these three countries to resolve their internal problems, which are the source of regional destabilization. I can assure the Council that my Government is already prepared to participate actively in these future meetings.

Until these steps can be taken, a mere Security Council presidential statement cannot hope to end with any dispatch the holocaust in which Rwanda and Uganda are engaged. It is true that the ostensible motive, as announced by the aggressors, is the issue of insecurity along the borders. I have already proposed an effective solution for this. If there are hidden motives, however, they are hidden to the Congolese delegation but may not be to the members of the Security Council. Can these hidden motives override consideration for the lives of the thousands of Congolese natives who continue to be slaughtered unjustly by the weapons of the aggressors?

In view of the Security Council's powers in the area of international peace and security, and until the international community takes additional steps to bring peace to the entire Great Lakes region, the least my Government expects from this meeting is, first, the realization that my country is the victim of armed aggression, as defined in resolution 3314 (XXIX), adopted by the General Assembly with a view to defining aggression.

Secondly, we expect condemnation of that aggression; thirdly, we seek full respect by the aggressors for international humanitarian law; fourthly, we expect withdrawal of the troops of aggression from our territory. In that regard, the Council can make use of the provisions of Articles 39 to 42 of the Charter of the United Nations. Fifthly, we seek from the Security Council the deployment of an interposing force along common borders. As the pretext used by the aggressors to justify their aggression is precisely insecurity along borders, this interposing force could control security along the common borders. Finally, my Government calls for the convening of an international conference on the restoration of lasting peace in the Great Lakes region.

I would like to reserve the right to take the floor later in the discussion.

The President (*interpretation from Chinese*): I thank the Minister for Human Rights of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Duval (Canada)(*interpretation from French*): Mr. President, first we would like to thank you and to congratulate you for having made today's debate possible. We welcome the presence of the Secretary-General at this debate.

Canada hopes that the debate on the peaceful settlement of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the ideas that will be discussed, can serve to define a solution to this conflict, which, unfortunately, has extended throughout the region and which now affects several countries.

At the outset, Canada reaffirms that a military solution cannot resolve a dispute that is essentially political, and that only negotiations can lead to a lasting solution and restore peace and stability to a region that has already undergone too much suffering. Like the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Security Council, Canada attaches the highest importance to respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, whether those of the Democratic Republic of the Congo or those of its neighbours.

Agreement to an immediate ceasefire, coupled with serious and sincere discussions involving all parties, offers the only solution to the military stand-off which has resulted from eight months of conflict involving the armed forces of eight countries and a dozen militias.

The people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the peoples of the entire region want peace. They want respect for their sovereignty and their borders, and security guarantees. They desire not war, but a return to the productive work of development and to the establishment of democracy.

Canada supports without reservation the efforts of regional leaders to achieve a negotiated solution. We join with our colleagues on the Security Council in inviting President Chiluba of Zambia and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to continue their tireless efforts. A great deal has already been achieved. A ceasefire, however, has yet to materialize.

All the forces involved must participate in a ceasefire while respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The ceasefire must be accompanied by a timetable for the withdrawal of all foreign forces involved in this conflict and by monitoring arrangements in accordance with the Lusaka agreements. In our view, this is an essential condition for the restoration of peace and stability in central Africa.

Canada, as it announced in autumn 1998, is prepared to examine the active involvement of the United Nations, in coordination with the Organization of African Unity, in the implementation of an effective ceasefire agreement and of an agreed process for the political settlement of the conflict. We would support adoption by the Security Council of concrete, sustainable and effective measures to this end.

As in any conflict, it is the civilian population that suffers the harshest consequences. The humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is seriously deteriorating and contributes to an increased number of displaced persons. Moreover, we are unfortunately witnessing serious human rights violations by all parties to the conflict. The Congolese population has suffered enough. We commend the courageous efforts of the United Nations Children's Fund to implement a major vaccination programme throughout the country. We trust that the goodwill shown on all sides in support of this campaign, regardless of their various allegiances, will be renewed when humanitarian organizations undertake to relieve the suffering of the Congolese people.

The ceasefire, monitoring arrangements and humanitarian assistance will, however, remain tenuous if they are not followed by dialogue among the various elements of Congolese civil and political society. This dialogue must lead to a national consensus, and to purely Congolese institutions chosen and approved by all Congolese. This transition will allow for the re-establishment of the rule of law, the restoration of a fair and independent judicial system and respect for the rights of all with no discrimination based on ethnic origin. It must also combat the culture of impunity which is still rampant in the region.

In our view, implementation of these elements is essential to national reconciliation among Congolese, and to the reconstruction and stability of the country and the region as a whole.

(*spoke in English*)

To ensure a lasting peace, we must find solutions to the various problems that have burdened the Central African region for too long. The worsening situation has led to plans to convene, under the auspices of the United Nations and the OAU, an international conference on peace, stability and socio-economic development in the Great Lakes region of Africa.

Canada supports this idea. We believe that not only the countries of the region, but also African civil society as a whole, must participate in such a conference. The

problems of the region, including those of nationality and the application of customary as opposed to judicial law, cannot be resolved without the vital contribution of the region's civil societies. Canada invites the international community to continue its consideration of this important issue so as to allow the holding of such a conference when the opportunity arises.

Our support for the regional mediation process and a peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains steadfast. We strongly encourage the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, to continue to work actively with the Secretary-General of the OAU and with all the parties concerned to reach a peaceful solution, and we hope soon to consider his concrete recommendations on a possible role for the United Nations to that end.

The President (*interpretation from Chinese*): I thank the representative of Canada for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Jagne (Gambia): Let me begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo with a view to finding a way forward in that seemingly intractable conflict. Let us hope that at the end of the day the voice of reason will prevail over the logic of war. We also acknowledge the presence of the Secretary-General amongst us this morning, and we thank him for coming. In the same vein, we salute the presence of the Minister for Human Rights of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The tragic situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been a cause for serious concern to my Government. Quite apart from the real threat that a combination of factors poses to the country's sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence, the entire Great Lakes region itself has virtually been transformed into a powder-keg. In the process, there have been serious allegations of massacres and other forms of gross violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. Consequently, the security situation remains precarious; and, as it continues to deteriorate, the number of refugees and internally displaced persons also increases. Let us seize this opportunity to remind the parties of their obligations to respect and protect human rights and also to respect international humanitarian law, including the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols of 1977. We also urge them to allow access of humanitarian assistance to those in need, and to ensure the safety of all humanitarian personnel.

It is against this background that we are meeting today to see what we can do, through a concerted international effort, to find a peaceful solution to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and, by extension, in the Great Lakes region. It appears that history is about to repeat itself, but it should be our common resolve to make sure that the mistakes of the past are not committed again. It will be recalled that the process of the Congo's decolonization was like a painful childbirth, followed by callous cold-war calculations; and what ensued is an open secret. A whole generation was thus wasted! Barely emerging from that unfortunate state of affairs, coupled with the vicissitudes of a country in transition, the Democratic Republic of the Congo was suddenly plunged into a series of internal and external problems. This war has so far produced no benefit for any of the parties. At best, the net result is massive displacements of civilian populations, an untold amount of suffering and loss of life, food shortages, the spread of diseases and economic misfortunes.

Since the problem has regional implications, my delegation has always expressed support for the regional diplomatic initiatives geared towards the peaceful resolution of the conflict. In this connection, my delegation would again like to commend the efforts of the Southern African Development Community, which mandates President Chiluba to undertake these efforts. It is our firm belief that through the Lusaka process, the collective security of all the countries in the region could be adequately addressed. It is the fervent wish of the Government and the people of the Gambia that the parties hear the voice of reason and cease hostilities immediately, accept a ceasefire framework, as already agreed to in principle as part of the Lusaka process, and enter into negotiations on implementation and monitoring arrangements. The proximity talks commenced with the rebels is a step in the right direction and should therefore be pursued.

We believe that in this difficult and complex conflict, negotiation is the way forward. A military solution is certainly not the best option. The parties to the conflict should therefore take the Lusaka process seriously. It is our fervent hope that today's meeting will serve as a catalyst to reactivate that process. The belligerents should not miss this golden opportunity to transform the troops' present standstill into a formal ceasefire. This, in turn, would pave the way for the United Nations to step in and play a more active role by deploying a peacekeeping force. It is the long-awaited rendezvous with history that we have been calling for,

but for this to happen the parties to the conflict must first and foremost agree on a ceasefire, without which there is very little that the rest of the international community can do to help them. They must understand that the security of their countries is inextricably linked, and therefore it is in their interest to work together for the collective security of all of them. An international peace conference could then be envisaged to address all other issues.

The President (*interpretation from Chinese*): I thank the representative of the Gambia for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Petrella (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I would like to thank you for having taken the initiative of holding this open debate, with the presence of the Secretary-General, on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. There can be no doubt that this is a legally complex and politically sensitive topic. We are convinced that the first step to solving a problem is recognizing that it exists. This is what we in Latin America and the Caribbean have done in the past with our own problems. With the understanding and support of the international community and motivated by the desire to find real, definitive and peaceful solutions to disputes, we successfully moved forward and created peace and tangible progress for our peoples. Accordingly, we can understand the complexity of the current situation in some parts of Africa.

We take a respectful approach to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We are guided by a real desire to defend peace and to encourage the parties to turn to the path of negotiation.

This conflict is legally complex. In our view, it is neither exclusively internal nor exclusively international. The influence and extent of each of these aspects could be debated, but certainly they both exist. At the same time, the conflict is politically sensitive because, either directly or indirectly, it involves major countries of the subregion and has the dangerous potential of spreading.

There can be no doubt that the main responsibility for resolving the conflict lies with those directly involved. No third party can impose a lasting solution if the parties lack the political will to adopt it. Nonetheless, we still believe that it is important to explore options that might encourage or point the way towards such a solution. In this regard, Argentina strongly supports the regional efforts that are under way, as well as the Lusaka process. This does not exclude the Security Council from playing a role by providing concrete support to the regional initiative during its various phases. During the current phase the priority is to obtain an effective ceasefire. The second phase is securing and consolidating this ceasefire by means of a peacekeeping operation. United Nations assistance is essential in both these phases.

While negotiations in such conflicts are essentially political, this does not exclude the implementation of principles and norms of international law. In the case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we believe that the following legal principles are essential.

First, there is an obligation to peacefully resolve the dispute. This obligation applies not only to the means but also to the ends. Therefore, we think that — with the necessary flexibility and without prejudging the legal status of the actors in this sensitive conflict — mechanisms for inclusive dialogue should be sought.

Secondly, once again it should be noted that the use of force does not bring territorial rights or legitimize changes in established borders. The rule of the immutability of colonial borders is a principle of general international law and applies to the African continent as it does to the American.

In this regard, respect for the principle of the territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is essential. This is not incompatible with the principle of protecting minorities. As has been successfully done elsewhere, it is possible to establish a system of safeguards that protects minorities' ethnic and cultural identities.

Among these essential legal principles, we wish to reiterate the principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other States, a principle that is incompatible with the presence of foreign forces. Through negotiations and dialogue, and with the United Nations assistance if necessary, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, together with its neighbours, must resolve all the security questions that affect their shared borders.

In this, the legal, context, we would like to reiterate once again that the serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law that have taken place and continue to occur on the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo are also the essence of the problem. These horrible violations deserve our concern and more firm and open condemnation. We urge that these events be duly investigated and punished.

We believe that a long-term solution to the problems that affect the Democratic Republic of the Congo today cannot be found in an insolated manner, but rather must be found within a politically stable regional context and with certain expectations for economic and human development. This is why we believe that convening an international conference on the Great Lakes region — as has been proposed by France — could, under the proper circumstances and at the appropriate time, provide an appropriate forum to analyze all these aspects of the regional situation in a comprehensive manner.

Finally, Mr. President, I would like on behalf of the Government of Argentina to thank you for your condolences.

The President (interpretation from Chinese): I thank the representative of Argentina for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Andjaba (Namibia): The Security Council convened at the level of Foreign Ministers on 25 September 1997 to address concerted international efforts to promote peace and stability in Africa. On 16 April 1998, the Secretary-General, at the request of the Security Council, submitted his report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (S/1998/318). That, indeed, was and remains a timely event, for Africa — today more than ever — needs peace and development for the prosperity of all its peoples. Neither nations nor peoples can do without cooperation for the good of all. Humanity requires solidarity and sharing in all the benefits derived from the common heritage of us all, on the basis of equality, mutual respect and mutual support for a common future. It is in this context that we view today's meeting.

The invasion of the Democratic Republic of the Congo by Uganda and Rwanda has plunged that country into a devastating war that has resulted in intra-African fighting on the battlefield: a war from which the region and Africa at large stand to gain nothing; a war whose premises are against the purposes and objectives enshrined in the charter of the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

It has been said, and rightly so, that in the 1960s independent African States inherited colonial boundaries together with the challenge which that legacy posed to their territorial integrity and to our attempts to achieve national unity. It was because of that shared and collective vision that the OAU decided in 1964 to accept the boundaries inherited from colonial authorities. What remains, therefore, is for Africa to forge national unity, good-neighbourliness and cooperation. Any deviation from these principles will have serious and unimaginable consequences for Africa. What we are seeing in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as a result of expansionist ambitions should be condemned; it must not be accepted as the norm in Africa.

The Inter-State Defense and Security Committee meeting of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), held in Cape Town, South Africa, in 1995, decided to take collective action in the event of attempts to change the legitimate Governments of member States by military means. Therefore, the Southern African Development Community has a stated obligation to ensure that the legitimate Government of a fellow SADC member should not be removed by invasion. Namibia adheres to that principle and believes in the non-violability of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of States. These are sacred principles that compelled us, together with Angola and Zimbabwe, to intervene in the Democratic Republic of the Congo at the expressed invitation of President Kabila and his legitimate Government. The sole purpose of our requested intervention is to prevent the collapse of the State machinery and the violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a fellow SADC member State. The Namibian involvement is for democracy, peace, human rights and regional cooperation.

Furthermore, the SADC Summit held in Mauritius on 13 and 14 September 1998, among other things, expressed deep regret at the outbreak of war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to remove the Government of President Kabila from power. Furthermore, the Summit welcomed the initiatives by SADC and its member States intended to assist in the restoration of peace, security and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In that regard, the Summit reaffirmed its call for an immediate cessation of hostilities and commended the Governments of Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe for providing troops in a timely manner to assist the Government and people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to defeat the illegal attempt by rebels and their allies to capture the capital city, Kinshasa, and other strategic areas. The Summit emphasised the need for all political actors in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to commit themselves to orderly and peaceful transition to multiparty democracy, primarily through constructive consultations and negotiations involving all stakeholders.

It is therefore important for all States Members of the United Nations to subscribe in earnest to the principles enshrined in the Charter and to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. There must be a clear distinction between invited and uninvited foreign troops in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Let me stress that as freedom fighters we never relied on ethnicity to win victory against oppressors, for we knew too well that apartheid colonialism was anchored in the principle of divide and rule. As Africans, we must avoid the politicization of ethnicity, for it can only be detrimental to African unity. We must also guard against ongoing attempts by external forces to exploit ethnicity for their own purposes. Of late, we have witnessed efforts to assist Africa in addressing its economic problems. We commend the United States-Africa ministerial meeting that took place in Washington a few days ago. But how can sustainable development take root in Africa in general, or, for example, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in particular, when sustained efforts are being made to plunge that country further into conflict?

The security concerns of any State are, indeed, legitimate. However, we should refrain from defining our security needs beyond our own borders without working within the framework of the United Nations and of the OAU. The unprovoked invasion of the Congo and the violation of its sovereignty and territorial integrity constitute an act of interference in the internal affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Namibia advocates peace and stability as a precondition for development and economic growth. Consequently, we wish for the disruption of the democratization process to cease and the reconstruction of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to resume soon.

Our deepest desire is to help create an environment conducive to normal political life in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have suffered enough, for too many decades. They need space and time to reconstruct their country. As indicated in the communiqué of the SADC Summit meeting on the Democratic Republic of the Congo held on 23 August 1998, the reconstruction of the Democratic Republic of the Congo as an independent, sovereign, united, peaceful, stable and prosperous country is critical to the achievement of the same objectives in the region and in the rest of the African continent.

The OAU and SADC are continuing to make efforts to bring an end to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In Victoria Falls, the heads of State or Government made a political commitment to put an end to the fighting and to search for peace collectively. This was followed by a meeting of Defence Ministers and other senior military personnel in Addis Ababa to work out modalities, a timetable, a calendar and resources, as well as monitoring, verification and the details of the respective troop withdrawals, in cooperation with the OAU. Regrettably, however, this process has come to a standstill.

On 18 January this year, at the request of President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, my country hosted a summit of the countries that are involved in the fighting in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Namibia agreed to host that summit, for we believed that the request was made in good faith. The aim of the summit was for the respective leaders to exchange views on how best they could cooperate to achieve the signing of a ceasefire agreement on the Democratic Republic of the Congo. That meeting resolved that a ceasefire agreement should be signed without further delay. Unfortunately, what followed was continued attacks on Government and allied forces. This cannot be tolerated.

In our view, the time has come for the Security Council to become actively involved, in accordance with its Charter obligation to maintain international peace and security. We are therefore encouraged by the action taken by the Security Council today. Let me therefore take this opportunity to express to you personally, Mr. President, and to your delegation our appreciation and thanks for the efforts you have made to focus your presidency on African issues. We are most grateful.

Unless all the parties involved negotiate in good faith and honour their commitments, the war in the Congo will continue raging. It is therefore imperative that a ceasefire agreement which will bring an end to the suffering of the Congolese people be signed. For our part, we still stand by the decision of the Windhoek summit.

We are encouraged by the positive developments of the liberalization of political parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo announced by President Kabila at the end of January 1999. It is our sincere hope that political activity in the Democratic Republic of the Congo will return to normal in the not-too-distant future.

Finally, I should like to say that the cold war has indeed ended, but external intervention in Africa has not ended — it has only diminished. But only Africa can make the African continent peaceful and prosperous. The international community can only assist.

The President (*interpretation from Chinese*): I thank the representative of Namibia for the kind words he addressed to me and to my delegation.

Mr. Vafle (Brazil): The Brazilian delegation considers it a timely initiative to convene an open debate on the peaceful settlement of the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and we express our sincere appreciation to you, Sir, for having made it materialize.

In paragraph 8 of his important report of 13 April 1998 on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and development in Africa (S/1998/318), the Secretary-General, who honours us with his presence here today, pointed out that at the Congress of Berlin of 1885,

> "Kingdoms, States and communities in Africa were arbitrarily divided; unrelated areas and peoples were just as arbitrarily joined together."

As underlined by the Secretary-General, the decision of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963 to accept inherited borders has provided the continent with a powerful tool to prevent territorial conflict. The task of nation-building, however, remains a daunting challenge for present and coming generations of Africans.

In his wisdom, the Secretary-General proposed a set of ideas to respond to the many situations of conflict that afflict the continent. Those ideas approach the short-term problems from the perspective of peacemaking, peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance. He also raised the issue of building durable peace and promoting sustainable economic growth, with special emphasis on good governance.

In its reaction to the report of the Secretary-General, this Council held an open debate on the issue and adopted a programme of work that produced resolutions addressing the efficacy of arms embargoes, the reduction of flows of small arms and the strengthening of the coordination between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations. In dealing with the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we should increasingly resort to the options that have been developed throughout the past year.

Placed in the very centre of the continent, the Democratic Republic of the Congo shares borders with nine other African States. It belongs to the central, eastern and southern subregions and can be either the hub for the promotion of economic integration and prosperity or a focus for discord and strife. Throughout their long history, African nations have been subjected to undue and disruptive foreign interference. Uninvited involvement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo should cease, and a political formula to promote national reconciliation should be negotiated.

A few weeks after receiving a notification from the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Security Council reaffirmed, on 31 August 1998, the obligation to respect the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and called for a ceasefire, the withdrawal of foreign forces and the initiation of political dialogue. While upholding the principle of non-interference, Brazil recognizes the right of a State threatened by foreign invasion to call for external assistance. We should differentiate those foreign forces within the Democratic Republic of the Congo that were invited by the Government from those whose presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo reflects different motivations.

Resolution 1197 (1998), adopted on 18 September 1998, stresses the responsibility of regional organizations. The OAU and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have played a leading role in the attempts to solve the impasse in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. There is, however, a need for increased political will on the part of the many players, as was expressed at the ministerial-level meeting of the Security Council on Africa last September.

The security of any State has a direct link with the security of its neighbours. Therefore any attempt to resolve the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo will have to take into account the safety of other countries of the region, some of which feel the impact of episodes of lawlessness from across their borders. The restoration of law and order is also a requisite for the full enjoyment of human and political rights.

The States of Central Africa have already pondered such questions. The Democratic Republic of the Congo belongs to the group of countries that, within the framework of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa,

organized a Subregional Conference on Democratic Institutions and Peace in Central Africa, held at Bata, Equatorial Guinea, in May last year. The Bata Declaration, which was unanimously adopted, recognized that the process of democratization in the region must lead to a political system capable of allowing the full expression of the people's will. It states that such a system should be based, *inter alia*, on the principles of respect for the rule of law; political pluralism; organization of free, transparent and fair elections; freedom of the press; independence of the judiciary; respect for human rights and human dignity; and the practice of dialogue and tolerance.

The Governments of the region should be supported and encouraged to fully apply those principles. That is the only route to prevent internal discontent from leading to armed conflict.

The international aspects of the conflict must be addressed by improving the mechanisms of cooperation between the United Nations, the OAU, SADC and other relevant subregional organizations. In this respect we support President Chiluba's efforts. The convening of a conference on the Great Lakes should also be pursued. The Security Council has reaffirmed the importance of holding such a conference. It has also stressed that the Council is prepared to assist, through effective measures, in the implementation of a ceasefire agreement and in an agreed process for a political settlement of the conflict.

OAU Secretary General Salim Salim addressed the Council last October. He expressed the view that there is consensus on the need to maintain the territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the legitimacy of President Kabila's Government, the need to create political space for the opposition forces, and the recognition that some of the neighbours of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have real security concerns that need to be addressed.

Those four points are essential in the quest for a solution. A fifth element relies on political will, both on the part of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the opposition parties, to engage in true negotiations that could allow for the fair and meaningful participation of all parties in the political process. The international community as a whole is expected to provide the financial, technical and political cooperation needed for this dialogue to prosper.

The President (*interpretation from Chinese*): I thank the representative of Brazil for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Déjammet (France) (*interpretation from French*): The conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been raging for almost eight months now. It involves not only Congolese rebel groups but approximately half a dozen African countries, and military operations are being conducted over an ever-widening area of the territory of that country.

Regional organizations, the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations have not remained inactive since the outbreak of the crisis, but we must acknowledge that their appeals for a cessation of hostilities have not been heeded.

In our debate today — requested by the Democratic Republic of the Congo and approved by the members of the Council — we must explore ways and means to achieve a peaceful settlement of this conflict. In this connection, the French delegation would like to make the following comments.

We will not attempt to go into the causes of the conflict. It is well known that they are numerous and that their analysis can itself be a source of disagreement among the parties. But we are aware of the effects of the crisis, particularly the risks of political destabilization in the States of the region and the humanitarian consequences — the flows of refugees. The territorial integrity and national sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of the Congo are in jeopardy. The principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of States, as set out in the Charter of the United Nations, has not been respected. France deplores these violations and calls for their immediate cessation.

What would be the components of a settlement of the conflict? We can isolate three aspects: the conclusion of a ceasefire, the implementation of a process of national reconciliation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the conclusion of the necessary arrangements to guarantee security and stability in the region.

Concluding a ceasefire is a matter of priority. Efforts have been undertaken, in particular by President Chiluba, to reach an agreement. France supports these efforts. We hope that ways and means can be found to ensure that a cease-fire is observed by all parties to the conflict. Considerable work has already been done in the context of the Lusaka process to define the modalities of a ceasefire and its implementation. Today the parties must conclude such an agreement.

In its presidential statement of 11 December, the Council declared itself ready to contemplate the active involvement of the United Nations, in coordination with the Organization of African Unity, in order to assist in the implementation of such an agreement.

Two points should be emphasized. The support of the United Nations for the implementation of a ceasefire will require a considerable effort on the part of the Organization. France hopes that the United Nations will fully play its part.

It is equally necessary for the Members of our Organization to call upon the parties to cease hostilities. There is no military solution to the conflict that could at the same time represent a genuine solution to the crisis, and this should be kept in mind. It is noteworthy also that donors will find it much more difficult to maintain the provision of assistance from their budgets to countries that continue to opt for a military solution.

Secondly, a peaceful solution to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo also would depend on the implementation of an authentic process of national reconciliation. Dialogue must of necessity be instituted among all Congolese. President Kabila committed himself, during the Africa-France Conference held in Paris last November, to pursuing the democratization process. We urge him to follow up on his commitment in specific terms. We take note of his recent proposal to organize a national debate, and it is our hope that this will take place in a genuine spirit of reconciliation.

It is clear that this dialogue among the Congolese must be embarked upon forthwith. It would be facilitated if, at the same time, a ceasefire were concluded and respected.

The third aspect of the settlement would involve the parties' negotiating and concluding the necessary arrangements to guarantee the security, stability and future development of the region. These principles, recalled in the presidential statement of 11 December, were respect for the territorial integrity and the political independence and national sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other States in the region, and, in this context, the orderly withdrawal of all foreign forces; arrangements for security along the international borders of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and the re-establishment of the authority of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo over the whole territory of the country. In addition, respect for human rights and humanitarian law are paramount, as well as the need to tackle the question of refugees.

The United Nations should provide the necessary assistance to the countries of the region so that these objectives can be attained. In this regard, France recalls the potential usefulness, at the appropriate time, of convening an international conference on peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region under the auspices of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity. A return to stability must also include the implementation of an authentic process of national reconciliation and democratization in all the countries of the region.

Mr. Burleigh (United States of America): The ongoing conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo represents one of the gravest threats to peace, stability and development in sub-Saharan Africa in decades.

The current conflict in the Congo has led to a deepening humanitarian crisis, exacerbated the plight of refugees and internally displaced persons, impeded the delivery of critical food and medical assistance, and in general hampered international and domestic efforts towards development and democracy. If this crisis widens, the implications for the region and the subcontinent could be catastrophic.

In Washington, the United States just concluded a ministerial meeting with representatives of over 40 African countries. Participants agreed on a partnership agenda, a blueprint for the future of United States/African relations and the future of the continent. Both the goals discussed — the economic integration of African States into the global economy, good governance, human rights and democratization — and the substantial progress the region has made in recent years could be jeopardized by the growing conflict in the Congo.

That is why the United States, among others, has been actively engaged in extensive shuttle diplomacy in support of regional mediation efforts to help end the conflict. Our approach is guided by a set of basic principles: the preservation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; the belief that there can be no military solution to the underlying problems of the region; and the belief that the human and humanitarian rights of all peoples in the conflict must be respected.

The United States fully supports the regional mediation efforts currently underway, particularly those led by the Southern African Development Community, known as the Lusaka process. We continue to encourage these efforts, as well as work being done by the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations to bring about a comprehensive, peaceful settlement. This goal of peace, however, has proven elusive and will require steady, persistent engagement by all.

As the war is prolonged, it grows ever more dangerous, leading to consequences that cannot be foreseen. Every leader in the region, and the international community itself, must be seized with the goal of ending the killing now.

We believe it is critical that a ceasefire be agreed upon as soon as possible. Direct talks between President Kabila's Government and the rebels are essential to that end. Any agreement must be accompanied by an inclusive national political process and the creation of a mechanism to address both the internal and external security concerns of the Congo and its neighbours.

The United States condemns the reported massacres, summary executions, torture, rape and ethnically motivated harassment and detention of civilians taking place in the Congo. We abhor the recruitment of child soldiers, the killing of combatants who lay down their weapons, hate propaganda and other abuses perpetrated by all sides. We remain deeply concerned by the danger of renewed genocide in the region and urge all parties to respect international human rights and humanitarian law.

In particular, my Government is deeply troubled by the ethnicization of this conflict. We are concerned by the apparent willingness of some regional States to collaborate militarily with ex-FAR and *interahamwe*, known *genocidaires*. We are also concerned by any developments that encourage insurgent movements, including UNITA, to threaten and destabilize neighbouring States from Congolese soil. Any agreement reached by the Congolese Government, the rebels and external state actors will be unsustainable if an effective means to contain these groups is not found.

United Nations investigative reports have pointed towards atrocities and violations of international humanitarian law in the Congo since 1996. Until recently, the Government of President Kabila and other parties have failed to cooperate with United Nations efforts to investigate these abuses.

In this regard, the United States welcomes the Congolese Government's recent invitation to the United Nations human rights investigator Roberto Garretón. We are pleased that Mr. Garretón was able to travel to the Congo and we look forward to his report. We urge the Congolese authorities to guarantee continued access for competent international investigators to look into all reported atrocities. All persons who commit or order the commission of grave breaches of international humanitarian law are individually responsible for their actions. In this context, we welcome the decision taken by regional leaders and President Clinton at the Entebbe Summit of March 1998 to begin work on the creation of an international coalition against genocide.

The United States calls on members of the international community to redouble efforts to limit arms flows to this region of conflict. The United States also calls for safe and unhindered access for humanitarian agencies to all those in need and for unrestricted access by the International Committee of the Red Cross to all detainees. All parties must guarantee the safety and security of United Nations and humanitarian personnel.

President Clinton has made our position clear: The United States would consider supporting a peacekeeping operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo if there were a comprehensive agreement among the belligerents to end the conflict and to observe a ceasefire. Any monitoring force should be limited in size; its mandate should be to observe and monitor, not to enforce the peace or to maintain the security of the Congo's borders.

An internal Congolese dialogue is essential. A sound political process must be inclusive and open and have the confidence of all Congolese. By helping develop such a process, the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations can play an important role in building a stable, peaceful path to democracy and national reconciliation in the Congo.

Mr. Dangue Réwaka (Gabon) (*interpretation from French*): The ongoing crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is of grave concern in that it has inflicted untold suffering on the Congolese people, is thwarting the efforts of the Government to reconstruct the country and threatens peace and stability in the region.

The destabilization of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which shares a border with nine countries and occupies an important place in Africa — particularly in

the light of its size, population and potential — would have incalculable repercussions. That is why we are particularly keen to ensure respect for that country's territorial integrity and sovereignty. Similarly, we must not tolerate any violation of the provisions of the Charters of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity with respect to non-interference in the internal affairs of States.

In that region, where cross-border populations play a very important role and can be used as a pretext by one State or another to interfere inappropriately in the affairs of its neighbour, strict respect by all sides of the principle of non-interference would make it possible to create a climate of mutual confidence that would help to promote sounder and more friendly relations.

In this connection, it should be noted that the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee On Security Questions in Central Africa, which met at Libreville from 28-30 April 1998, recommended that its member States cooperate closely in the struggle against illicit trafficking in arms and that sanctuaries for armed groups not be established in neighbouring States.

Even if we appear to be stating the obvious by asserting that resort to force as a means of resolving conflicts provides only transient solutions, whereas dialogue, consultations and negotiations ensure lasting solutions, my delegation would still like to emphasize this point.

Not only does the use of arms complicate the search for a peaceful resolution of differences, but it is also a source of much human suffering: the displacement of populations, the destruction of socio-economic infrastructures acquired at the cost of great efforts, massive flows of refugees into bordering countries and the sudden spread of disease. This list is not an exhaustive one by any means.

For all these reasons we reiterate our condemnation of the massacres of civilian populations carried out in Sud-Kivu and ask that the Council order an international inquiry so that those responsible can be found and brought to justice.

The time has come for the United Nations, specifically the Security Council, to give active and concrete support to African regional initiatives aimed at finding a negotiated and definitive solution to the crisis that has spread through the Democratic Republic of the Congo since 2 August 1998.

To that end the Security Council should ask the parties to the conflict to sign without delay the ceasefire agreement that they have already agreed to in principle. In order to enforce this ceasefire, the United Nations, in cooperation with the Organization of African Unity, should start thinking now about deploying in the Democratic Republic of the Congo a neutral international peacekeeping force. In addition to monitoring borders, this force would also be mandated, *inter alia*, to demobilize armed groups, collect and destroy weapons and control illicit arms flows.

In view of the interrelatedness of the problems facing the Great Lakes region, we believe that the convening of a carefully prepared international conference, as suggested by France, under the auspices of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity, would help extinguish the hotbeds of tension, re-establish confidence and strengthen peace and security in the region.

Mr. Türk (Slovenia): Slovenia welcomes today's open meeting of the Security Council, which is devoted to the situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We consider that situation as one requiring the urgent attention of the Security Council and of the international community at large. Moreover, we consider the meeting today an opportunity for a genuine open orientation debate. The Security Council has already heard the views of the delegation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which we welcome at this meeting. We look forward to hearing the views of all those Members of the United Nations that have chosen to speak today. The Security Council needs the input of the United Nations Members that are currently not members of the Security Council.

The situation in and around the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a situation of an armed conflict with far-reaching consequences. It is a situation characterized by human suffering and humanitarian problems which have reached dramatic proportions. It is a situation involving important, indeed, fundamental principles of international law and one affecting the long-term stability of a large part of Africa. For all these reasons, it needs to be considered most seriously and with the highest possible degree of intellectual and moral accuracy. All of us speaking today bear a heavy responsibility to ensure that the debate is serious, honest and productive.

The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is not new. Quite to the contrary, it is a situation

on which the recent history of the Great Lakes region of Africa has cast some of its longest and darkest shadows. It is necessary to discern which among the causes of the current conflict need to be identified in the effort to grasp the situation with the necessary accuracy.

Some of those causes stem from the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 and the subsequent developments which have affected the Democratic Republic of the Congo, then Zaire. In the aftermath of the defeat of the forces responsible for the genocide in Rwanda, the winds of change brought a new Government to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Government established in 1997 offered a promise of transition to democracy, the rule of law and political stability. These were positive developments. Those of us who had the opportunity to attend the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Summit in Harare, Zimbabwe, in May 1997, will never forget the atmosphere of promise and hope which resulted from the change in the Great Lakes region at that time and which generated the atmosphere of optimism in Africa.

However, much of that promise has remained unfulfilled to date. The allegations regarding crimes against humanity and massive human rights violations allegedly committed in 1996 and 1997 were not thoroughly investigated, and the cooperation of the new Government in that regard was not forthcoming. The political processes necessary to create conditions for power-sharing, for proper treatment of minorities and for democracy were not started. Much precious time was wasted and many opportunities were missed at that time. The resulting instability was bound to affect security in the region. All these developments were unfortunate, and one can legitimately ask whether a more vigorous and committed attitude of the international community in 1996 and in 1997 could have made a difference.

The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo deteriorated seriously in 1998. The developments since August last year have been especially disturbing. The rebellion grew to large proportions. Military interference by two neighbouring States, while motivated by seemingly genuine security concerns, transformed the crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo into a regional threat to international peace and security. The subsequent military assistance of some other countries from the region to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has not brought a solution. Indeed, a military solution is very unlikely. A protracted military conflict in a vast area in the heart of Africa has the potential to become a long-term crisis and a breeding ground of widespread instability.

The military action of the two neighbouring States against the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo represents a serious challenge to the basic principles of international law concerning the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of States. The entire international community has to express its concern and reject such practices, which undermine the fundamentals of the international order and of stability in Africa.

Speakers before me have addressed the issues related to the search for peace. I agree with what was said. It is imperative that a ceasefire be agreed to immediately and that provision be made for an orderly withdrawal of all foreign troops and for the re-establishment of the authority of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo throughout its territory. All States must be called upon to respect the territorial integrity and the sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

We encourage the African leaders, with the assistance of the Organization of African Unity and the Secretary-General, to redouble their efforts to achieve an early agreement on a ceasefire, which will open the way to addressing all the other problems. The United Nations should be ready to assist, when a ceasefire is reached, in the maintenance of the ceasefire and in stabilizing the security situation in the region.

I wish to turn now to the humanitarian issues and to the problems of human rights.

Slovenia strongly condemns violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed during the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We condemn massacres of the civilian population which have taken place mostly in the South Kivu province since the outbreak of the conflict in August 1998.

In August we learned about the massacre in Kasika. Later, in November 1998, as we learned from reports, more than 1,300 civilians were killed in the towns of Samba, in the Maniema province, and Aketi, in the Orientale province. From 30 December to 1 January, 500 civilians were massacred in the area of Makobola, in the south-east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. And very recently, on 5 March, more than 100 civilians were massacred around the town of Kamituga in the province of South Kivu. Most often the victims are innocent

civilians, children, women and elderly. The spread of the practice of genocide in the region must not be tolerated. Such violations of human rights and international humanitarian law against the civilian population require specific action to bring those responsible to justice.

It is encouraging that the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has already demonstrated its readiness to act. We noticed with appreciation that a Ministry of Human Rights has been established in order to promote the much-needed respect for human rights in the country. We welcome today the presence among us of Minister Léonard She Okitundu, who spoke at the beginning of this meeting. We also welcome the cooperation of the Government with the Special Rapporteur Roberto Garretón, and we hope that this cooperation will continue and lead to satisfactory results. We wish also to express our strong hope that the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other parties to the conflict will allow the relevant international agencies unhindered access to all persons detained within the territory of the country. Furthermore, we wish to stress that all the military forces are responsible, in accordance with international law, for the humanitarian situation in the territories under their effective control. Furthermore, restrictions on the work of non-governmental organizations, media personnel and human rights organizations have to be eliminated so that assistance can be provided to the people in need.

We believe that, notwithstanding the military conflict, steps for creating a normal democratic environment should be taken very soon. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo should create conditions that will allow a democratization process that is genuine and inclusive and that fully reflects the aspirations of all the citizens. The international community needs to stress the importance of internal political dialogue among all political and civil-society actors in the country. The process of democratization should be carried out through the establishment of democratic institutions and the holding of free and fair and democratic elections as soon as conditions permit.

A country's internal political situation of course is an internal affair of each sovereign State, but certain principles are of general importance and can be implemented. We would like to draw attention especially to the principle of power-sharing. Efforts aiming at the establishment of good governance and power-sharing merit full international support.

The international community should strongly encourage the dialogue among the leaders of the countries in the Great Lakes region. Through the dialogue regional leaders should honestly address problems and face them. In this regard, Slovenia has supported and continues to support the idea proposed by France of an international conference for the Great Lakes region. We also agree that such a conference should not be a single event but a process that would include and address all the critical issues faced by the countries in the region. Such a process would include but would not be limited to the issues of security and power-sharing.

Let me make a general concluding remark. Action is needed to end the war and to create an environment for the development, in all fields, of public life and of the lives of Congolese citizens. Allow me to quote in this context an American politician, William Jennings Bryan, who, at the turn of the century, said,

> "Destiny is not a matter of chance; it is a matter of choice. It is not a thing to be waited for; it is a thing to be achieved."

Today's open debate in the Security Council is the first concrete step taken here in the Security Council, but the final solution to the problem lies with the Congolese people themselves and with the other countries in the region, in particular the parties to the conflict. Support for the regional efforts for a peaceful solution to the conflict has to be rendered by the international community as a whole. The Security Council needs to play an active role now and at later stages. However, the final and lasting solution to the problems lies with the Congolese people and the peoples of other countries in the region.

Mr. van Walsum (Netherlands): The Netherlands is deeply concerned about the further deterioration of the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We therefore welcome the opportunity to address this question in an open debate of the Security Council. It goes without saying that we associate ourselves entirely with the position of the European Union, as it will later be expressed by the German Presidency.

It is particularly worrying that, after a promising start, the peace process has reached an impasse. We must collectively find a way out of this impasse before the

conflict develops into a full-scale war of unforeseeable proportions.

It is not only the fighting itself that demands our immediate attention. Widespread violations of human rights on both sides and the collapse of the economy are plunging ever more inhabitants of the Democratic Republic of the Congo into misery.

We are convinced that a structural political solution can be found only through a process of negotiations. We call on President Kabila to enter forthwith into a dialogue with all parties involved in the conflict.

The success of these negotiations depends on the political will of all sides to confront the key issues, in a common endeavour. Respect for the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity is one of those key issues at stake here. Respect for the legitimate security concerns of the countries neighbouring the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the east is another.

As for the internal situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a political dialogue, with the participation of all parties in Congolese society, must be launched without delay. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo should take up its responsibility in this regard. The Netherlands expresses the hope that the Government's announcement of a national debate on a new constitution will pave the way for further democratization of the country.

The scope of the crisis and the inherent risk of further escalation require that the international community involve itself and facilitate the process of peace in every possible way.

Some of the groundwork for such a process has already been laid in regional efforts. We trust that a more active involvement of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity will further the cause of peace. The Netherlands is prepared to support the negotiations between the parties to the conflict and the national dialogue in an appropriate way. Ultimately, an international conference on peace and security in the Great Lakes region should bring about a durable peace in that region.

We should like to reiterate our view that the illegal flow of arms is one of the root causes of conflicts in the region. Peacemaking makes no sense if the international community cannot address this problem more effectively.

Mr. Al-Dosari (Bahrain) (*interpretation from Arabic*): My delegation wishes to express its sincere thanks to you, Mr. President, for organizing this important meeting at this particular time, when conflicts are tearing apart the African continent.

The subject of the peaceful settlement of conflicts is an important topic that is of particular concern for the Security Council. The Council encourages all the Member States of the United Nations to resort to peaceful means of settling conflicts, in keeping with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

As our meeting today is being held to discuss the ongoing conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, my delegation wishes to express its serious concern that, due to the great number of parties involved, this continuing conflict poses a threat not only to the peace, security and stability of the Great Lakes region, but also to the entire African continent. My delegation also wishes to express its concern over the very serious humanitarian repercussions that the conflict has had on the civilian population throughout the country. Hundreds of thousands of persons have been displaced and are living under the most appalling health conditions because the absence of security has made access to their territories by humanitarian agencies almost impossible.

Our delegation wishes to affirm that the settlement of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo will not be achieved through military means. A permanent solution can become a reality only through negotiation among all the parties involved. We would like to support all the diplomatic initiatives aimed at finding and reaching a peaceful settlement of the conflict. In particular, we would like to welcome the initiative proposed by the Secretary-General in the course of the twentieth Conference of Heads of State of Africa and France, held in Paris from 26 to 28 November 1998. The aim of that initiative is to achieve a settlement of the conflict and to reach an agreement on an immediate and unconditional ceasefire. We believe that the States of that region can play a very important role in encouraging the parties to the conflict to sign a ceasefire agreement, in response to the Secretary-General's initiative, as a first step towards the peaceful settlement of the conflict.

The solution to the problems of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must stem from a process of national reconciliation that includes all parties, that is acceptable to all the Congolese and that leads to free and fair elections as soon as possible.

We appreciate the important role assumed by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in this respect. We hope that its efforts will be crowned with success and that it will be able to convince all the parties to the conflict to reach a ceasefire agreement as a first step towards reaching a peaceful settlement of the conflict, thereby ending the hostilities and bringing about security and stability in these African States in order to avoid the possible harmful consequences of the war's continuing for a long time without a solution.

Furthermore, our delegation would like once again to reaffirm the importance of respecting the territorial integrity, political stability and national sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as the principle of non-interference by other countries in its internal affairs.

Our delegation would also like to support the idea of holding an international conference on peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region — at the appropriate time and under the aegis of the United Nations and the OAU — in order to put an end to such conflicts in the region and to enable the countries of the region to devote their resources to development.

In conclusion, our delegation wishes to support the efforts of the Secretary-General and his consultations with the OAU and all the parties concerned with the aim of finding a peaceful and permanent settlement to the conflict.

The President (*interpretation from Chinese*): I thank the representative of Bahrain for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia): My delegation welcomes the decision to hold an open meeting of the Security Council on the question of the peaceful settlement of the dispute in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This formal meeting not only provides an opportunity for the Democratic Republic of the Congo to be heard on an issue of vital importance to it, which is its inherent right enshrined in the Charter, but it also allows members of the Council — as well as the larger membership of the Organization — to express their views on the important issue of peace and security in Africa. Indeed, the views and perspectives of the larger membership of the Organization on this subject are pertinent and should be heard, as nowhere is the need greater or the significance for the future of Africa more profound, than in the peaceful resolution of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

If the third-largest nation in Africa were to be allowed to languish in factional violence, this would have grave implications for the peace, security and stability of the entire region. In this regard, Malaysia notes with dismay and concern the further deterioration of the situation in Africa as a whole, less than a year since Secretary-General Kofi Annan issued his report — on 13 April 1998 — on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (S/1998/318). Clearly, the African renaissance that South Africa's Vice-President Thabo Mbeki eloquently talked about cannot take place unless and until these conflicts are resolved and a new structure of peace and security and legitimate order emerges on the African continent.

The disintegration of the regime of the late President Mobutu in May 1997 has been characterized by some as the beginning of a new era in post-colonial Africa, amid high expectations of positive change and renewal. Unfortunately, the new Government in the Congo, headed by President Laurent Kabila, inherited a country that was deeply divided, demoralized and financially bankrupt. Nevertheless, the promise of change and transformation of the system that was left behind by President Mobutu on the basis of democratic institutions and the restructuring of the economy were welcomed and applauded by the international community. However, these hopes were dashed on the rocks of the inter-ethnic conflict and rebellion that threatens the very survival of the newly installed Government, which was compelled to seek the support and assistance of friendly neighbouring countries.

The involvement of a wide range of protagonists in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is indeed regrettable and has raised the prospect of a major war on the African continent, with serious risks to the stability and integrity of not only the Congo itself but also all of its neighbours. The situation in the Congo is particularly alarming given the fact that the war there interlocks with other conflicts in the region, thereby rendering any effort at mediation an extremely difficult one.

Malaysia notes with concern the cross-border character of the conflict in the Congo, which further complicates what is already a very complex internal situation. Clearly, there can be no lasting solution unless both the internal and external factors of the conflict are addressed and resolved. In this regard, we support fully the efforts being made, notably by President Chiluba of Zambia, to bring all those involved in the Congo conflict

to the negotiating table. That could result in an immediate and unconditional ceasefire, thereby paving the way for a negotiated settlement of the conflict and providing for the orderly withdrawal of all foreign troops currently in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. That would have to be followed by efforts at national reconciliation and democratization, including the holding of free and fair elections in the country. In this regard, Malaysia commends the diplomatic efforts that have been made by African leaders — namely, those of South Africa, Mozambique, Namibia and Zambia — aimed at seeking a peaceful solution to the conflict. We believe efforts at regional diplomacy represent the most viable approach in resolving the conflict and deserve the strong and sustained support of the international community and this Council.

My delegation believes that the process of rebuilding the Democratic Republic of the Congo can succeed only in a climate of peace and stability which would allow the Congolese people to enjoy their long-denied rights, including the right to development. African leaders can help by advocating a non-violent solution to the conflict and promoting African models of cooperation, which have worked in a number of conflict situations. The international community can and must play a major and continuing role in supporting these efforts by working with the countries involved to promote reconciliation, broaden political participation, lay the groundwork for economic recovery and help build systems of justice that are fair, credible and effective.

The worsening humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a stark reminder of the destabilizing effects of war, with badly needed resources, which could have been channelled to education, health and other sectors, being drained to finance a devastating war. Throughout the Great Lakes region, inter-ethnic violence has resulted both in great human tragedy and in new obstacles to political and social progress. There cannot be a real future for the Great Lakes region unless the cycle of violence is broken once and for all. This will happen only if the people of the region can chart a new course of inter-ethnic relations based on genuine reconciliation and peaceful relations rather than on revenge and the settling of old scores. It must, however, be predicated on the need to mete out justice to the perpetrators of the massacres and other crimes against humanity, and on respect for the principles of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States in their external relations.

My delegation also believes that international efforts to promote peace and stability in Africa should not ignore the magnitude of the socio-economic problems confronting the continent as a whole. The Secretary-General himself has emphasized the importance of social and economic equity and the imperatives of socio-economic development in the quest for a durable peace. Also stated in his much-acclaimed report was the need for a holistic approach to the issue of peace and security in Africa, encompassing not only peacekeeping but also peacemaking and post-conflict peace-building. For the international community, helping build a new, democratic and prosperous Congo is both a challenge and an opportunity to redress past failures and to contribute to the building of a stable and peaceful State for the benefit of Central Africa and the continent as a whole.

What has transpired in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is part of a long drawn out saga, one for which the nations of the region and the international community must share responsibility. We believe it is critical that appropriate steps be taken to lay the foundation for long-term stability and progress in that troubled country. We encourage President Kabila to begin that process on the basis of open dialogue.

Unfortunately, the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains for now one of several theatres of conflict in Africa in which the continuation of hostilities has jeopardized efforts at finding solutions to the continent's other critical problems, which demand the urgent attention of its Governments. In this regard, we strongly urge the Congolese people and all the concerned parties to summon the political will to resolve their problems not through military means, which will not bring a durable solution, but through dialogue and negotiation. For its part, the Security Council must make every effort, in coordination with the Organization of African Unity and subregional initiatives and mechanisms, specifically those of the Southern African Development Community, to secure an immediate and effective ceasefire in the Congo and to continue to explore an appropriate role for the United Nations in determining concrete, sustainable and effective measures in the implementation of any ceasefire agreement and subsequent efforts at post-conflict peace-building in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In this regard, my delegation considers the proposal of France for an international conference on the Great Lakes region at an appropriate stage, which has been supported by others, to be a constructive approach, and we welcome it.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): First of all, I should like to thank you, Mr. President, for the condolences you expressed to the Government and the people of the Russian Federation in connection with the death of Russian citizens as a result of the tragic incident involving a helicopter of the United Nations Mission in Haiti. I should also like to join you in expressing condolences to the Governments and the people of the United States of America and of Argentina.

Moving on to the subject of today's discussion, I should firstly like to welcome the Minister for Human Rights of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mr. She Okitundu, to our meeting today. The Russian delegation shares the serious concern expressed at the ongoing conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which represents a serious threat to regional peace and security. Russia has constantly advocated achieving a peaceful political settlement of the crisis while preserving the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We are certain that acts of violence will not make it possible to achieve a long-term resolution of the conflict. We have consistently supported the efforts of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and individual regional leaders to explore ways of finding a peaceful way out of the conflict.

We believe that it is important to emphasize once again the need for all States to abide by the principles of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other countries and the non-use of force, in accordance with the Charter and the aims of the United Nations. We believe that the basis for regulating the protracted conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo should be the approach suggested by the countries of the subregion, based on a ceasefire agreement, the withdrawal of foreign troops from the territory and guarantees of peace and security along its borders with contiguous States. One of the key provisions of such a settlement should be ensuring the territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In this context, we believe that the desirability and the modalities of involving the rebels in the regional negotiating process should be determined by the regional mediators, together with the legitimate Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

As a matter of principle, however, it is quite obvious that lasting peace and security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo cannot be achieved unless the Congolese themselves organize a nationwide dialogue with the participation of all segments of Congolese society, as contemplated in the regional settlement scheme. We are convinced that at this stage efforts should be focused first and foremost on speedily achieving a ceasefire agreement. Otherwise, it will be impossible to set in motion the machinery for a peace settlement. Continuing the stalemate in the negotiating process and opting for a military resolution of the conflict would be likely to worsen the situation and lead to a large-scale humanitarian catastrophe and further destabilize the situation throughout the region, and we cannot rule out the possibility that the Democratic Republic of the Congo will disintegrate.

Our delegation cannot fail to be concerned at news of the mass atrocities perpetrated against the civilian population throughout Congolese territory and of human rights violations and persecution on ethnic grounds. We support the need for a careful and speedy investigation of these communications.

The Russian delegation actively supports the policy of strengthening the coordination of the activities of the United Nations, the OAU and SADC in order to reach a political settlement of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We believe that the initiative of the Secretary-General to send a special envoy to the region is a timely one.

The possibility of the future deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as well as the desirability and modalities of such an operation can be determined only after a stable cease-fire has been achieved. The Security Council's decision on this matter should necessarily be preceded by a very careful and thorough analysis of the situation, both in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the region.

The Russian delegation supports the idea of holding, in due course and under the auspices of the United Nations and the OAU, an international conference on peace and security in the Great Lakes region. We are convinced that this will be possible only if consensus is achieved among the participating States regarding the purposes of such a forum.

Russia will continue to help to promote the peacekeeping process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the spirit of the recommendations of the Security Council, making use of its contacts with the OAU, the SADC, the States of the region and other interested countries.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock (United Kingdom): We welcome this open debate, even though the subject before us is sensitive for many. It concerns a country, a fellow State Member of the United Nations, which desperately needs international help; a region which has been too long in crisis, with horrific humanitarian consequences; and a continent whose tribulations must be successfully addressed by the United Nations system as a whole, or that system will show itself incapable of meeting the increasing demands put on it. If we can turn the tide for Africa, we can turn the tide for the United Nations.

The United Kingdom is prepared to make a special effort to establish how non-Africans can best help Africans, and specifically the Organization for African Unity (OAU), to end the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Late last month British Minister of State Tony Lloyd went to the region, as the Special Envoy of Prime Minister Blair, to explore what scope there was for ending the war.

The Minister encountered an overwhelming sense of frustration. He found fatigue on all sides with the war and common ground among the parties on what needed to be done to stop the fighting. No one questioned the need for dialogue among all parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including the rebels, to pave the way for a more inclusive government. And it was widely acknowledged that the security concerns of the neighbours of the Democratic Republic of the Congo were genuine, that an end to the war could come about only through some arrangement or mechanism which addressed them.

But the Minister also found a startling lack of political will and creative thinking among the parties to get the building-blocks of a settlement into place. This is not for want of external pressures and external offers of help. Numerous envoys have visited the region. Three Presidents have been tasked by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the OAU to mediate. Fifteen conferences, 10 of them at the Head of State level, have been held. But the conflict, and its dreadful human rights and humanitarian side-effects, goes on. Having met the key leaders involved in the war, Tony Lloyd judged that they could stop the war if they really wanted to.

The role of the international community, and this Council, has to be to make them want to. The United Nations system, other international institutions and individual countries, through their bilateral relationships, can all play a part. This is particularly the case with the European Union, whose position will be made clear by the German presidency later in this debate. We all have diplomatic, political and financial resources which could make a big difference to the Governments and populations in the region. There are enormous reserves of goodwill towards the peoples of these beleaguered countries. We need to use these resources to construct a motivation for peace and economic regeneration among the regional leaders. They must together be persuaded that a continuation of this war is not in their interests and that there is a different way out. It is encouraging that there is such a clear consensus among representatives who have spoken today on the steps that need to be taken, not excluding the Minister for Human Rights of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Let me try to summarize those steps. The first step is a cease-fire agreement. The key to unlocking this is direct talks with the rebels. A military solution, as so often elsewhere in Africa, is a chimera. We must use international experience to help President Kabila and the Congolese people shape a framework in which a constructive political dialogue can take place. The innocent civilian population of the Democratic Republic of the Congo deserves no less. The statement made this week by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo about the need for national reconciliation is encouraging. Its intentions need to be implemented.

The second step is the withdrawal of foreign troops. This will require a tough negotiation process among all the parties, and some substantive, creative ideas. The United Kingdom is fully committed to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We would not countenance any suggestion of partition. But the bare fact is, the Democratic Republic of the Congo's neighbours will have no incentive for withdrawal unless some credible mechanism can be developed which will bring about the disarmament of rebel groups, particularly the ex-Rwandese Armed Forces and Interahamwe, on their borders, and ensure border security into the future. We must start mapping out the potential arrangements for this. The United Nations and certain Member States can help, but the principal contribution must be African and regional.

The third step is coherent international involvement to motivate, monitor and sustain these processes. We applaud the efforts of SADC and the OAU, through President Chiluba, to try to mediate this complex, sprawling conflict. But the continued resistance of the parties to these efforts demonstrates the need for further inputs, leverage and pressure from outside the region.

As part of this process, the Security Council has already indicated its readiness to consider how it could assist in the implementation of a cease-fire and settlement. The United Kingdom, with several partners, has already done work on possibilities for a peacekeeping presence. We must continue to refine and develop these ideas and feed them into the negotiating process. What the United Nations and the international community could do to make an agreement stick will be a key factor in making it happen.

The fourth step is a framework for tackling the wider and deeper problems in the Great Lakes region. The United Kingdom fully supports the holding of an international conference on peace and security in the Great Lakes. But a conference of this kind will work only by careful preparation, and preparation will take time. We should begin this work now. Only by mapping out the paths towards a more secure and stable region will the incentives for ending the current conflict become clearer. They must include arrangements for promoting and protecting human rights and for the economic regeneration of the region.

Hence the fifth step: the economic angle. With political understanding advanced and security arrangements in place, development and investment resources will be attracted in. We therefore need to plan for an economic development conference for the Great Lakes, drawing together major bilateral assistance partners, the United Nations and its agencies, the European Union and the international financial institutions, either as part of or in parallel with a conference on peace and security.

The challenges and the burden for the international community in each of these steps will be significant, but none of these ideas will get even to square one without a dramatic change in political will on the part of the parties to this conflict, and above all the leaders of the sovereign nations of the region who have its future in their hands. It is they who must take the steps to bring this senseless war to an end. If they do, the Security Council, the broader United Nations and the international community will act in immediate support. This is the conclusion which the Governments involved in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo must draw from today's debate.

The President (*interpretation from Chinese*): I thank the representative of the United Kingdom for his kind words addressed to me.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of China.

The conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has lasted over half a year, causing deep concern among African countries and the international community at large. China, too, has been very concerned over developments in the Great Lakes region. We are deeply disturbed by the loss of life and property caused by the ongoing conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its grave impact on the peace and stability of the Great Lakes region and the entire African continent. As a friend of the African countries and peoples, China is deeply worried at the fact that the conflicts in the Great Lakes region have been dragging on for so long.

Since the very start of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, China has maintained that the parties concerned should reach a ceasefire as soon as possible. On the basis of full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the parties concerned should find an effective way to solve their differences, disputes and other problems through dialogue and negotiations, proceeding from the overall benefits of peace and development to Africa and the fundamental interests of the African peoples, and in the spirit of African unity and national reconciliation. Only if they do so will the conflicts come to an early end and peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as well as good-neighbourly relations between countries in the region be restored.

China supports the active efforts of African countries and regional organizations to secure a political settlement of the Congo question. At the same time, we strongly believe that the international community, especially the Security Council, should respond to the legitimate requests and appeals of the African countries, show genuine concern for African questions and take effective steps in this connection. In particular, it should give political and financial assistance to African countries and regional organizations in their efforts to solve their own problems and play a positive and meaningful role in helping African countries to settle the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as soon as possible.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

The next speaker is the representative of Burkina Faso. I invite him to take his place at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*interpretation from French*): The African States on whose behalf I speak

wish first to express their satisfaction at seeing you, Sir, preside over the Security Council and to congratulate you. Your country, the People's Republic of China, has always supported the African cause, through the dark times of the struggles for independence, in the various international bodies and even in the bipolar confrontation, where it was always at our side. It is hardly surprising, then, that, in the course of your presidency of the Security Council, faced with exasperation at the instability in Africa, you should have taken the initiative of convening this debate on one of the conflicts currently of concern to Africa and the entire world.

This is not to say that the situations between Ethiopia and Eritrea, in Angola, Sierra Leone, Somalia, the Comoros and elsewhere are not worrisome. Far from it. But the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo — because of its polymorphic nature, the overt and covert involvement of the countries of the region and its stakes for the belligerents — entails serious dangers whose ramifications can harm the entire African edifice.

It will therefore be clear that our problem — how to find a solution to the conflict — is complex. Forgive me for saying, Sir, that it is a veritable Chinese puzzle. Since it is an inextricable situation, it is easy to understand why neither the OAU meetings nor the efforts of the countries of the subregion have led to a conclusive settlement.

The futility of these efforts may have left the unfortunate impression that Africa is complacent to the tragedy in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Such thinking would be meagre thanks to all the good will of all the apostles of peace who have devoted and continue to devote themselves to restoring peace to that country.

This tireless quest for peace led the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to envisage a special summit, to be held late this month, in order

> "to consider all the ongoing initiatives and mediation efforts and to find the deep-rooted causes of and reasons for the problem of conflicts in Africa, their persistence and the relative lack of success of attempts to find ways and means of bringing our actions to fruition."

Unfortunately, this special summit was a still-born project, but nothing will stop the efforts being made, both in Africa and by the international community, to find a just solution to the conflict in the Congo.

At the African level, the OAU has taken praiseworthy steps. In particular, the most recent summit meeting of the Central Organ of its Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, held on 17 December 1998, reaffirmed the guiding principles, contained in the OAU charter, which alone can guarantee a lasting settlement of the Congolese crisis.

First, it enjoined the parties to the conflict to respect the sacrosanct principle of the inviolability of the frontiers inherited from colonialism, passed down to us by the founding father of the OAU in resolution AHG/Res. 16 (1) adopted in Cairo in 1964. Non-respect for borders in Africa would open a Pandora's box from which disputes without end would emerge. In the case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, this is all the more necessary because the country's size — 2,345,000 square kilometres — and the dissimilarity of its peoples could be the source of irredentist claims. The OAU therefore recalls that this is an essential point that cannot be called into question short of a tacit agreement to do so between the States themselves.

Another fact of paramount importance is that the African heads of State reaffirm their support for the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo as the sole legitimate authority, representative of the entire Congolese people. Accordingly, they call on the rebels to lay down their weapons with a view to promoting the opening of talks with the Government. By this appeal, they are addressing all the parties to the conflict.

However, the OAU takes into consideration another requirement of its charter: that all African disputes must be settled by peaceful means; in other words, negotiation should always prevail. Therefore, the various sides in the Democratic Republic of the Congo must concretely demonstrate political will. In this regard, we are pleased to see that there has been positive development. Long distrustful of considering such an eventuality, Congolese power seems to have yielded to the inevitable reality that only a discussion with the armed opposition can open the path of genuine national reconciliation. It seems therefore that henceforth neither the principle itself or the question of venue will be an obstacle to this dialogue among the Congolese.

We therefore appeal to the wisdom, patriotism and political will of all the actors to silence the weapons and to promote the establishment of real national accord. It is clear that in order to be viable, this sincere peace should be rooted in democratic values such as liberty, respect

for human rights, tolerance and so on. These, we believe, are the basic considerations that can help define a platform of understanding to bring calm to the situation.

It is also increasingly becoming a question of an interposition force — a peacekeeping force — and an international conference on the Great Lakes. Any peaceful solution to extricate ourselves from the quagmire must receive the support of the African countries. From this standpoint, it should be noted that there is no antagonism between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity on the Congolese question. To the contrary, their actions are complementary. How can it be otherwise, given their shared ideal of promoting the search for peace? On many occasions, the OAU has shown expertise in the area of conflict settlement. For proof we need look no farther than the platform it proposed for resolving the dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea, of which the Security Council has recognized the relevance in recent resolutions. The only obstacle thwarting its efforts is the critical lack of logistical means. We expect that the United Nations and the international community, will help reinforce those capacities.

We wish, through this debate, to reach concrete proposals which, together with the efforts of the Organization of African Unity and of the Southern African Development Community, will bring the long-awaited peace to the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the greater well-being of the Congolese people, for it is clearly their destiny that is at stake.

The President (*interpretation from Chinese*): I thank the representative of Burkina Faso for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Kastrup (Germany): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia — and the associated country Cyprus align themselves with this statement.

The European Union is very concerned about the crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which has escalated into a large-scale regional war. Due to a complex set of strategic alliances, a series of previously unconnected conflicts in the Great Lakes region has blended into one huge crisis which has turned the Democratic Republic of the Congo and parts of the territories of neighbouring countries into a battleground. This crisis has created immense human suffering, it has dramatically increased the already high number of refugees and displaced people in this region and it is gradually destroying the social and economic base of the countries of the Congo basin and the Great Lakes region.

The European Union recognizes that the root causes of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are very complex. However, we sincerely hope that today's debate will not dwell on mutual accusations between interested parties, but will instead contribute to generating a forward-looking approach focused on solutions and results.

The European Union reiterates its support for the principles of the territorial integrity and respect for the sovereignty and security of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its neighbouring countries. In this context, the European Union agrees with the statement of the President of the Security Council of 11 December 1998 and affirms the obligation to respect the territorial integrity, political independence and national sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and of other States in the region, including the obligation to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations. It also reaffirms the need for all States to refrain from any interference in each other's internal affairs in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. The European Union strongly calls on all States to comply with these principles. It continues to be concerned about the involvement of several countries of the region, an involvement which has not led to the intended stabilization, but has led to a dangerous escalation which now threatens the stability of the region as a whole.

The European Union reiterates that the current conflict can be solved only through a negotiated settlement between all the parties concerned with a view to an urgent political solution to the conflict, leading to the withdrawal of foreign troops from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and allowing the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other countries in the region to find peace, stability and democracy.

The European Union would like to emphasize that it is most important that all warring parties in the conflict show their unconditional willingness, through concrete steps, to speed up this peace process. In this context, the EU welcomes President Kabila's preparedness to enter into negotiations with all parties to the conflict, including

the rebel movement, and encourages him to conclude a ceasefire agreement as soon as possible. The EU also urges all other parties involved in the conflict, both the rebel movement and external actors, to participate in a constructive manner in ongoing peace efforts.

The EU calls for the conclusion as soon as possible of a ceasefire among the various parties to the conflict and for its prompt implementation. It emphasizes the need for a political process which must rest on two elements - addressing, first, regional security problems by finding a mechanism that meets the legitimate security concerns of neighbouring countries, and, secondly, the internal situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by initiating an all-inclusive political dialogue with the aim of establishing a democratic society in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In this context, the EU emphasizes the need for a continuous and inclusive negotiating process with a format that allows the active participation of all major stakeholders. The EU reiterates its support for an international conference on peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region, which would help to consolidate a peace agreement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to ensure the stability of countries in the region. The EU emphasizes the need also to address the question of the proliferation of arms and the illicit trafficking of commodities in the region, which fuels this proliferation. The need to reintegrate disaffected soldiers and other combatants into civil society must also be addressed.

The European Union strongly supports the regional peace initiatives undertaken by, among others, the Southern African Development Community troika led by the President of Zambia and supported by the Presidents of Mozambique and of Tanzania, and the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The EU would welcome more active involvement by the United Nations and by the OAU to coordinate and streamline the various peace efforts. The EU is supporting regional peace efforts, *inter alia* through the assistance of the EU Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, Mr. Aldo Ajello. It would be prepared to consider a rehabilitation programme for the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the event of an effective cessation of hostilities and internal progress on peace, democracy and respect for human rights. It reiterates that it might find it increasingly difficult to continue its present level of budgetary assistance to countries involved in this conflict should they persist with the military option. Considerations in this regard would not, of course, affect purely humanitarian assistance.

We welcome the statement by the President of the Security Council of 11 December 1998, expressing the preparedness of the Council to consider, in the light of efforts to achieve peaceful resolution of the conflict, the active involvement of the United Nations to assist in the implementation of an effective ceasefire agreement and in an agreed process for a political settlement of the conflict. The EU also stands ready to support efforts that might be undertaken by the United Nations to assist in the implementation of a ceasefire agreement.

The European Union strongly condemns acts of violence perpetrated against the civilian population since the beginning of the crisis, and calls for an independent investigation of allegations of major human rights violations reportedly committed by all parties to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In this context, the EU expresses its deep concern about recent reports of new mass killings in the Kivu region.

The EU is deeply concerned at the recent kidnapping and brutal murder of eight tourists and one park warden in Uganda, killings that were apparently politically motivated. The EU expects the authorities of all countries concerned to do their utmost to arrest the perpetrators and bring them to justice, and to prevent similar incidents.

The European Union welcomes the visit of the United Nations Special Rapporteur, Mr. Garretón, and hopes that this will help to foster progress in the development of the human rights situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It also welcomes the work of the United Nations human rights field office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and supports its strengthening.

The EU firmly calls on the parties to the conflict to respect human rights and humanitarian law and to abstain from inciting ethnic hatred. It calls on all parties to guarantee the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and their unhindered access to the affected civilian population in need. The EU strongly condemns the recruitment and use of child soldiers and other combatants, and urges all parties to abstain from this practice. The EU further urges all parties to refrain from laying landmines.

The EU welcomes the assurances by the parties to allow a respite in fighting, called "days of tranquillity", later this year, which will be needed to allow the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund to carry out an urgently needed polio immunization campaign for some 10 million Congolese children. We are encouraged by this development and strongly hope that the parties will stand by their commitments. I would like to conclude my statement on this more positive note by appealing once more to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the rebel movement and the external actors to urgently enter into serious and constructive negotiations on a political settlement of the conflict. Finally, the EU emphasises on this occasion the need for a continuing process of genuine national reconciliation and democratization in all States of the region.

The President (*interpretation from Chinese*): There are a number of speakers remaining on my list. In view of the lateness of the hour, and with the concurrence of the members of the Council, I intend to suspend the meeting now.

The meeting was suspended at 1.10 p.m.